

Renovation Is Vital To Prolonging Strawberry Beds

NEWARK, Del. ~ Strawberry beds can last as long as four years, but renovation is vital if you want to prolong their lives. University of Delaware horticultural agent Dave Tatnall offers the following advice on renovating strawberry plants.

Soon after harvest, within two to three weeks, remove all old leaves by mowing or sickling. Mowing is faster and takes less effort, but sickling is more precise and allows more control. If you decide to mow, Tatnall suggests you set the mower about as high as the blade can go so as not to injure the plant crowns or bases.

He advises narrowing the rows to a width of about 12 inches by cultivating between them. Also thin the plants within each row, leaving 4 to 6 inches between plants.

"Liquid feed the beds periodically until mid-September," the agent says. "Fertilize about every three weeks, or when you notice

the leaves are a pale green and growth is slow." Liquid feeding will promote plant vigor. Occasional watering will also promote growth. Water thoroughly every week to 10 days if the weather is dry.

Weed control is very important. "Don't let the weeds gain a foothold, or they may eventually over-

run the bed," Tatnall says. "Weed often, especially if there is a lot of rain. Moist weather conditions can encourage more weeds, and if you have a lot of crabgrass, for instance, it can choke out the plants."

If you are going away for an extended vacation, ask someone to

weed your strawberry bed for you, he suggests. It is important not to let weeds grow in between the plants.

Under ideal conditions and with proper care, a strawberry bed can be renovated three years in a row, Tatnall says.



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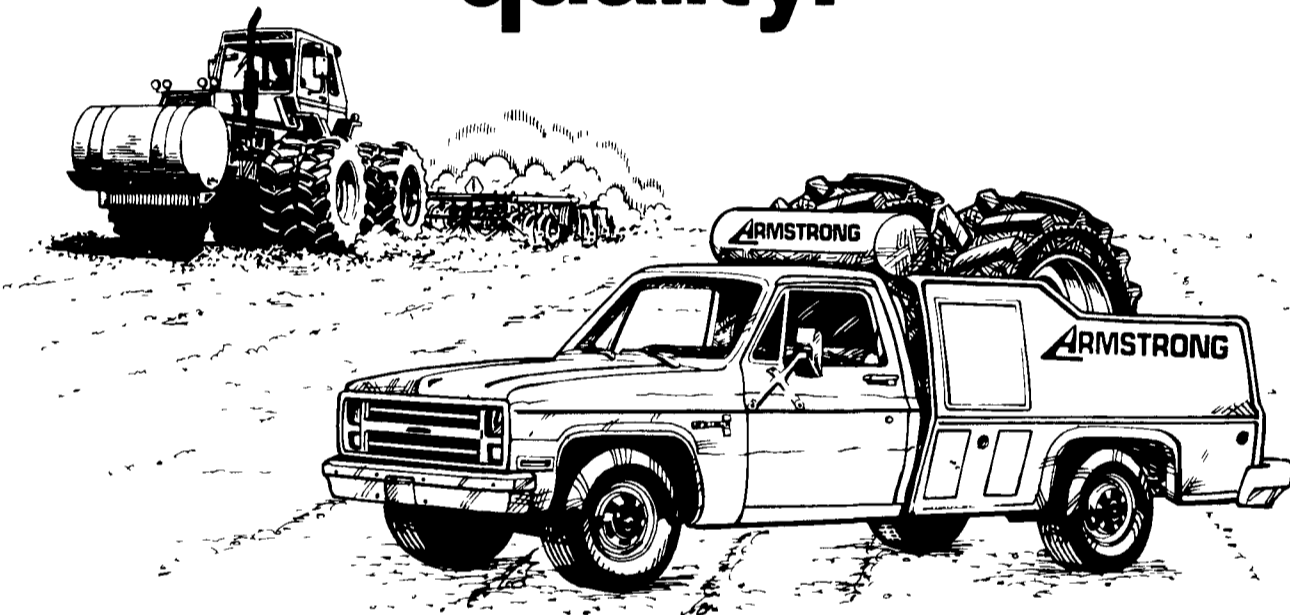
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